



The Success Center's
Cultural Corner
Newsletter



Maria Prokushkina from Kaliningrad in Russia has lived in the United States for two years and in Tuscaloosa for a year and a half. She currently attends Shelton State because she feels, "American college gives more opportunities to get a better job in the U.S. A. or somewhere else."

When asked what she likes best about Shelton, she mentions the teachers: "I do like the instructors. It sounds funny, but I love to go to the Success Center and appreciate tutors' help there."

She least likes the parking situation, stating, "If I come five minutes before classes, I won't get a parking place."

Maria also likes the American economy and the safer environment. She says, "In comparison to where I come from, there is much less violence. The low economy level in Russia leads to criminal increase. That is what is basically going on in Russia."

Also, presidential elections are coming up in the summer of 1996 in Russia. Maria feels this means a lot to the Russian people.

She observes, "Some of them are disappointed in democracy and want to come back to Communist times; some go for the strong federal government, actually, dictatorship, but hope that the right choice will be made, and that Russia will be able to overcome all the difficulties it is going through."

Although she doesn't miss the economic or political problems of her homeland, she does miss public transportation. She notes, "Driving is much fun, but y'all are so dependent on cars."

She misses her family and friends which are the "only things" she misses about Russia. Her mother is a radiologist. Her father is a Russian language and literature teacher. Sergei, her brother, is 15 years old and enjoys wind surfing. She states, "I miss them very much. I wish my family would be here, but it is impossible right now."

Maria emphasizes that Kaliningrad is "a little city, the former Konigsberg" and "is separated from the main part of Russia." She adds, "It is like Alaska to the U.S.A. and looks like this area from Germany so actually I've never lived in 'real' Russia, but I've been there several times though. My city is on the beach of the Baltic Sea. Going to the beach has always been a big deal of late spring, summer and early fall. We swim, play volleyball, or just go along the shore and pick up little pieces of amber. Also, sailing and wind-surfing are a big part of my life."

"Since we're very close to the sea, it rains much during the winter. I have to carry an umbrella almost all the time. Whenever we have a good snow, my friend and I go out and get into snowball fights. We get home exhausted but happy. Snow fights have always been a return to childhood for me."

As for her life in the U.S., Maria cites as "the best experience" going to American Christian Academy: "This school is like one big family where I was accepted just as I came. ACA is filled with the spirit of friendliness. I could feel that the faith in God there comes first. Consequently, it changed my personal views much. At the same time, I have a lot of after-school things to remember, for example, running track. This support from my team and that feeling of acceptance made ACA a very valuable experience and a precious part of my life."

One surprise for Maria was the use of multiple-choice or matching tests in American education. She says, "In Russia, we don't have multiple-choice or matching tests. If you don't know the answer, you don't know. It is an inside joke with my Russian friends to call these tests 'multiple guess.' In Russia, we have many essay questions. I am very thankful to my Bible, history, and English teacher, Mr. Orehotsky, at American Christian for giving us essay tests which made us think and express our opinions."

When Maria graduates from Shelton, she plans to transfer to the University of Alabama.